

JONATHAN EDWARDS ON RHETORICAL AUTHORITY

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Article:

Throughout his life Jonathan Edwards worked on a treatise entitled a "Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted." He managed to finish very little of it. To get an idea of what he had intended to say, we have to reconstruct it from bits and pieces of materials not published in his lifetime and fill in the gaps with published works and our own conjectures.

The "Account" apparently tries to prove the unity of history, nature, and theology by way of a new kind of rhetoric. The treatise was also to be somewhat polemical: according to Perry Miller, Edwards was "highly resolved not to let science itself, as a mere description of phenomena, take the place of a philosophy or theology of nature."¹

We are, Edwards believed, persuaded to a right and proper understanding of the world by an encompassing rhetorical process of which science, though important, is only a single aspect. The problem with science, as with any discipline whose immediate aim is not obviously the illumination of the moral dimension of our lives, is that its ends tend to supplant the properly ultimate ends of God. In Edwards's view the origins and grounds of discourse determine its ends; thus the aim of rhetoric (had Edwards used this term) should be to reveal the possibility and explicate the means of God's communication with man. For the problem is not that communication among men is impossible without its being originated in God, but that it *is* possible. Coherent and rational visions of the world *can* be accomplished in a Godless society, yet they may damn the beings who live by them.

Edwards's basically Lockean position, which has been argued and re-argued, is that words refer to ideas rather than to things themselves, that complex ideas are built from simple ideas which are themselves sensible, that men have the same sense organs with approximately the same capacities, and therefore that language can serve as the basis for a coherently organized society—for through language we can have certainty of nature "not only *as great* as our frame can attain to, but *as our Condition needs*."² To Edwards, however, man's needs go well beyond those enabling him to deal pragmatically with nature and to maintain a stable society precisely because "our condition," first and foremost, is that of fallen creatures. The world's languages are in a state of Babel: men born into societies whose languages are in such a state are destined to damnation because they cannot receive the Word.

Puritan theology asserted that God gave His Word to the children of Abraham (and the Puritans counted themselves among this small number), so that they might live within a social order that could prepare them to receive grace and eventual regeneration. The problem, of course, was that the Bible is as subject to multiple interpretation as any other text, as the dissension among the Protestants themselves forcefully demonstrated.

A paradox arose here. The Word was a necessary preparation for receiving grace, yet one's interpretation of the Word was suspect unless one had received grace. This paradox lies at the very center of Puritan theology, yet as far as I can determine, it was never stated explicitly. It was crucially important to the Puritan saint in two

respects, however. If he had not properly received the Word, his own election was uncertain. Just as important, the Word stood as the proper paradigm for his own words; and since, accepting Abraham's covenant, he was responsible for the preparation of his seed, his faulty teaching could result in God's imputing the sins of his children to him.

Therefore, the Puritan could not help but sense, if he did not consciously recognize, that interpretive and rhetorical acts had to be capable of being grounded in the divine order. Mere speculation or secondary testimony would not suffice. The right understanding of language must rest upon the rock that no Puritan saint could afford to deny—the experience of a saving grace. Accordingly, the Puritan conception of grace had to be formulated in such a way that it could perform this function within a theory of language. The usual image for grace as a light was an epistemological metaphor and unsatisfactory in this context. Perhaps this is the reason the curious paradox was never stated. Toward the end of the Puritan era, however, Jonathan Edwards formulated the metaphor that could solve the problem and possibly provide the foundation for that unified view of history, nature, and theology that Edwards was unable to complete.

The question of what Edwards believed grace is and how it functions must be answered if we are to understand his view of language. Those who have asserted Edwards's Lockeanism, most notably Perry Miller³ and Michael Colacurcio,⁴ have argued that to Edwards grace functions as a "new simple idea." As Colacurcio put it, "If nature is nothing but so many of God's ideas regularly communicated to all men's minds, then what could grace *conceivably* be but one very special idea communicated to the saints alone? " (71). Yet this claim is fairly simply refuted: to Locke *all* simple ideas are derived from sensory experience; there are *no* innate ideas or principles. For Edwards grace is not, of course, a sensory experience, although it is a state that will alter our sensory experience in a very special way. Furthermore, the alternative to be found in Locke's philosophy, that grace might be a type of the first degree of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, which "forces itself immediately to be perceived," is out of the question. To Locke intuition is always a perception of difference: "Thus the mind perceived at the first sight of Two *Ideas* together, by bare *Intuition*, without the intervention of any other *Idea*. . . 'Tis only [on] this *Intuition*, that depends all the Certainty and Evidence of all our Knowledge. . ." (531). But as we shall see, to Edwards grace provides an intuition of sameness. And whereas to the Puritans the conference of grace is a partial restoration of an unlearned harmony with nature, to Locke identity is not an innate idea (*ibid.*, 85) but a product of experience. Moreover, to Locke there are no identical ideas—only ideas understood as identical through the category of relation (*ibid.*, 526).

In Edwards's theology grace is not understood as a "new simple idea." It adds no new element to experience; rather, it alters our experience by altering the perspective of our experience. Thus Edwards de-scribes the effects of grace much as Kant will describe the effects of assuming the aesthetic standpoint. Like the aesthetic, the standpoint of grace provides a sort of universal position, a common ground on which all men can agree. Just as one can be assured of perceiving beauty when seeing it, so one can be assured of perceiving the effects of grace when in a state of grace. Thus, like the aesthetic standpoint, grace confers authority upon the individual within it. But of course the authority of the saint is not like what Kant conceived for the artist: God alone is the moral artist. The saint can merely appreciate His masterpieces—His Nature and His Word. Yet the saint's appreciation confers an authority upon him that goes well beyond that of the aesthete, for his perception of the right order of nature and his grasp of the right order of language establish his authority with regard to the word of God and therefore with regard to society.

Consider the following statement from a too little regarded thesis of Edwards entitled "On the Medium of Moral Government—Particularly Conversation": "By all that we see and experience, the *moral* world and the *conversible* world, are the same thing. . . ."⁵ This passage exemplifies Edwards's view that rhetorical and moral authority issue from the same ground. Yet beyond this it contends that what can be said and what can be judged are identical. To put it another way, the world one apprehends is determined by the words one speaks. This notion lies at the center of Edwards's concerns. The passage therefore should be carefully considered in its full context.

In both "On the Medium of Moral Government" and its companion piece "The Insufficiency of Reason as a Substitute for Revelation," Edwards attempts to defend the doctrines of revealed religion against attacks on all sides by deistic thinkers. Men like Anthony Collins, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, and Lord Bolingbroke had by the early decades of the eighteenth century argued that man could discover the essential principles of religion purely through the use of reason. Edwards's purpose in these two treatises is to demonstrate that reason has its limits.

Edwards's argument in "The Insufficiency of Reason" is, for all its length, a simple one. After defining reason as "that power or faculty an intelligent being has to judge the truth of propositions" (261), he argues that the truth of any proposition in a chain of argument will always depend upon the truth of the proposition which precedes it. Original propositions will always depend upon some sort of experience, so that rational statements are only as valid as the experience grounding the original propositions. Experience is then classified into various sorts of "testimonies," including the testimonies of the senses, the memory, and history or tradition.

Once Edwards has shown that reason can judge only against a pre-given background of one or more kinds of testimony, he observes

that when any general proposition is recommended to us as true, by any testimony . . . that seems sufficient, without contrary testimony . . . and the difficulties that attend that proposition . . . are no greater . . . than what might reasonably be expected to attend true propositions of that kind, then these difficulties are not only no valid or sufficient objection against that proposition, but they are no objection at all. (267)

Having said this, Edwards can easily conclude that revelation is a kind of testimony subsumed under the heading of history and tradition, and that the difficulties attending revelation are the very sort of difficulties one might expect to have concerning messages from God. In short man has no reason not to accept revelation.

Next, Edwards turns to argue that revelation is necessary. To summarize briefly his conclusions: Inasmuch as we are creatures, as creatures the light of nature alone can *possibly* give what must be known of the moral. But it is highly improbable, since the light of nature does not have "a *sufficiency of tendency* actually to reach the effect" (276) or else it would have reached that effect, whereas the facts show that it has not. Furthermore, inasmuch as we are sinners, as sinners we cannot be led to what we need to know of religion by the light of nature "in any sense whatsoever" (277). Why not? Edwards does not explain here.

The explanation, of course, lies in the Calvinist doctrine of original sin. In his "Doctrine of Original Sin Defended" Edwards defines original sin primarily in terms of the "*depravity of nature*" (Dwight, II, 309). The first man was governed by two kinds of principles, the natural and the divine: "When man sinned, and broke God's covenant . . . these superior principles left his heart . . .," whereupon "Man did immediately set up *himself*; and the objects of his private affections and appetites, as supreme; and so they took the place of *God*" (537).

The important thing to note here is that original sin is defined as a shift in point of view from the infinite and divine to the finite and human. The proof of original sin is that men "come into the world *mere flesh*" (538). The horizon of man's perception is reduced because of his bodily existence, so that the result of original sin is "self-love"—man can constitute his world and its values only from their relations to himself. Edwards's doctrine of revealed religion, and consequently his entire moral philosophy and (our concern here) his theory of language, are guided by his conception of man as a sinner: man as a finite being.

But Edwards saw man as a finite being with an infinite purpose. The nature of man's end, indeed the end of all creation, Edwards consistently conceived in terms of communication: "The great and universal end of God's creating the world was to communicate himself. God is a communicating being."⁶ God's own essence defines Him as a communicating being (Misc. #94, 253). The pure being of God is generated by the reflexive act of God's having a perfect image of himself, and "the Son of God is that image of God which he infinitely loves"

(Misc. #94, 255). The Holy Spirit is that reflexive act holding between the two; thus the trinity. The union of the trinity, being perfect, cannot be added to, yet God grants the possibility of man's participation in his glory by "an inclination in God to cause His internal glory to flow out *ad extra* . . . not that he may receive but that he may go forth." "For it can't be that He can receive anything from the creature" (Misc. #448, 133-34). The highest end of finite man, therefore, is to become able to be a recipient of communication from God.

Precisely how man can receive communication from God is the subject of "On the Medium of Moral Government." Its point is that if conversation is to serve as such a medium, there must be a social authority in the form of speakers who have been partially restored to the original point of view that was removed by Adam's sin.

Edwards begins by distinguishing between "God's *moral* government of his creatures, that have an understanding and will, and his general government of providential disposal" (Dwight, VII, 278). The latter refers to the operation of the material world. A satisfactory explanation of Edwards's understanding of the material world would take us far afield from our immediate concern, and the topic has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere.⁷ It is sufficient to say here that since the relationships among God and man and the world as material are sustained by God, inasmuch as the testimony of the senses is reliable, man is capable of understanding the material world. Consequently, in "On the Medium of Moral Government" Edwards is justified in saying that "the nature, design, and ends of the material world, by no means require that it should be declared and made visible by a revelation of the methods, rules, particular views, designs, and ends of it . . ." (Dwight, VII, 278). Science and man's reason are adequate instruments for understanding the material world.

The moral world, however, is a different matter. Here, even when the objects of perception are the same as those of the material world, the relationships with which the perceiver is concerned are different. Moral perception is concerned with the objects' relationships to one another within a whole of value. Just as things are *beautiful* insofar as they maintain a proportionate or symmetrical bearing toward the other objects considered along with them (Dwight, I, 693-95), beings are *excellent* (the analog of beautiful) insofar as they reflect the totality of the spiritual realm within which men judge them. *Consent*, the relationship holding between spiritual beings, is one being's recognition of another's status as spiritual and as within a spiritual totality. Thus the greater the totality of the spiritual world within which a being is consented to, and the greater totality to which the being consented to consents, the greater the excellency; or, as Edwards says, "The more the Consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the Excellency" (696). The highest of all possible excellencies is summed up in Edwards's famous phrase, "consent to Being in general."

As we have already seen, man has been reduced by original sin to judging all relationships in terms merely of his own being—his own ends and aims. Since the relationships that hold in the moral world are relations of proportion, of part to whole, perspective is everything; and since the whole exists in terms of God's communication with Himself, man is by necessity doomed, unless God extends His communication to him.

Edwards's conception of unregenerate man is indeed that of the poor spider dangling helplessly over the flames. Man is unable by his own fallen essence to perceive the excellency of being in general or even to perceive that his final end should be to receive communication from God. Yet God has determined that man shall live within a moral government, and therefore it is necessary that he should receive communication from God: "The moral government of a society, in the very nature of it, implies, and consists in an application to their understandings, in directions to the intelligent will, and [in] enforcing the direction by the declaration made" (Dwight, VII, 278). He uses the analogy of a political government here, the relationship between a king and his subjects, to illustrate his conception of the relationship between man and God. The analogy is legitimate, for in either case the subjects cannot act in accordance with the ends of the state unless the subjects can partially foresee the ends the ruler has in mind. The answer is the same in both cases: only through the word can the subject receive an understanding of what he should do.

Edwards therefore begins "On the Medium of Moral Government" with a definition of the key term:

By *conversation*, I mean intelligent beings expressing their minds one to another, in words, or other signs intentionally directed to us for our notice, whose immediate and main design is to be significations of the mind of him who gives them. Those signs are evidences distinguished from works done by any, from which we may argue their minds. The first and most immediate design of the work is something else than a mere signification to us of the mind of the efficient. Thus, I distinguish God's communicating his mind to us by word or conversation, from his giving us opportunity to learn it by philosophical reasoning; or by God's works which we observe in the natural world. (Dwight, VII, 278)

Once again, for us to be able to grasp fully Edwards's meaning we must turn elsewhere—this time to his private notebooks, where he discusses the nature of the sign. There we find that a "great part of our thoughts and the discourse of our minds concerning things without the actual ideas of those things of which we discourse and reason; but the mind makes use of signs instead of ideas" (Misc. #782, 113). This statement seems Lockean enough, but it has a different import than Locke would have given it. Differentiating between "*mere cogitation*" and "*apprehension*," Edwards sees that most of the time we recognize the relations among things by recognizing the relations among the signs that refer to them. But when we do so we are not necessarily affected by them—that is, we ourselves do not change because our attitude toward the things has not changed. When we apprehend, however, we change in our attitude toward the things, so that the very appearances of the things change as well. For this reason Edwards calls the same differentiation one between "merely speculative" and "sensible" knowledge (Misc. #782, 119). This differentiation extends "to all the knowledge we have of all objects whatsoever" (Misc. #782, 120).

Interpretation, then, can take place at two distinct levels. When Edwards applies this differentiation to the end for which man was created—to receive communication from God—it becomes clear that man can receive that communication in two ways. The first is a preparatory communication, by a sign, i.e., through revelation. The second is an apprehension of the meaning of that same sign through grace. Another possibility is God's direct inspiration, the inspiration that produced revelation in the first place. Thus, the "extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God in inspiration imparts speculative knowledge to the soul, but the ordinary influence of God's Spirit communicates only a sensible knowledge of those things that the mind had a speculative knowledge of before" (Misc. #782, 121). Since knowledge of revelation without apprehension has already been classified by Edwards as a kind of speculative knowledge earlier in the same essay, man *as an individual* clearly has no way of knowing before receiving grace what knowledge is or is not truly revelation or how to gauge the relevance of a true revelation.

Here Edwards's categorization of revelation as a kind of history or tradition takes on its full significance. He makes it clear in the fourteenth section of "On the Medium of Moral Government" that the kind of thoughts that people can think, indeed the kinds of phenomena that they can experience, are determined by the traditions they receive. "The heathens," for example, "received and believed many great truths, of vast importance, that were incomprehensible . . ." (Dwight, VII, 287) and "received many traditions, rules, and laws, as supposing they came from God, or the gods, by revelation" (288). Unquestionably, without the testimony of visible saints to confirm the validity of the tradition, based upon the authority of their own conversion experience, the unconverted may very well accept a tradition that will prepare for them a way straight to hell. Edwards's view is clear: without first accepting the true tradition—the revealed Word—and without a knowledge of his intended final end, people have little chance of preparing themselves for that end.

The pilgrims' preparatory journeys toward their destined communion with the Father, consequently, are less individual than social acts. The possibility of the sinner's salvation is founded on the fact that human nature is a social nature, since language, as conversation, is sustained by society through the speech and actions of the visible saints. Only through language, as the Word of God, can sinners perceive relationships as God would have them seen. Moral behavior is for Edwards, then, a product of rhetorical forces: "The *ground* of moral behavior, and all moral government and regulation, is society, or mutual intercourse and social regards. The special medium of union and communication of the members of the society, and the being of society as such, is conversation . . ." (282). Though finite human beings can judge the material world with some certainty insofar

as the testimony of the senses and the framework of reason are trustworthy, they can judge the moral world with certainty only insofar as the testimony of tradition is sound. Here Edwards is obviously getting very close to a notion of cultural relativity. Perhaps he would have been forced into such a position if he had not already had the doctrine (and his experience) of grace ready at hand to authenticate revelation. Yet even the experience of grace does not *absolutely* confirm the Gospel to be the Word of God:

The truth that the soul is most immediately convinced of . . . is not that the Gospel is the word of God. But this is the truth that the mind firstly and more directly falls under a conviction of, viz. that the way of salvation that the Gospel reveals is a proper, suitable, and sufficient way, perfectly agreeable to reason and the nature of things, and that which tend to answer the ends proposed. (Misc. #752, 126)

According to Edwards, only by inference do we suppose the Gospel to be the true Word of God.

This inference, though obvious, is extremely important for our understanding of Edwards's thought: grace can ground neither statements of apodeictic truth, such as mathematical proofs, nor empirically valid assertions of scientific truth; rather, grace supports statements which induce persuasion and conviction. Grace is a seat of rhetorical authority in exactly the same way as, to the rationalists whom Edwards opposed, such as the Earl of Shaftesbury, taste would be a seat of rhetorical authority. In other words we might say, without stretching the facts too far, that the effect of a saint's receiving grace would be analogous to a barbarian's receiving taste. The one who had once seen the forms of the world in a material, grasping, self-serving way now begins to see the order and proportion of God's great art.

Even after grace, of course, one remains a finite being but with an essence no longer of *radical* finitude. We have already seen that for Edwards, as with Berkeley, anything is *as it* is perceived. Once one believes and is allowed by grace to apprehend God's communication through nature, one's perception of oneself changes; therefore the person changes, becoming a saint. In "The Nature of True Virtue" we find that the primary result of grace is a shift in the direction of one's perception from consent to beings in particular to consent to Being in General, which is at the same time a shift of motives from love of self to love of God.⁸ In "A Divine and Supernatural Light" we find that grace is accompanied by an intensification of one's appreciation of speculative truths of divine things (Austin, VIII, 298). For our purpose now, however, what grace does not do is more interesting.

"This spiritual light," writes Edwards, "is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God" (296). When unregenerate man becomes saint, the Word remains the same, though his relationship toward the Word changes:

Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind, but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. (302)

As we have already seen, what Edwards usually means by "excellency" is a thing's fittingness within or its appropriateness for the world as perceived. If grace does not add to one's knowledge beyond the Word as the saint has already received it, grace does alter one's perception of the world, according to Edwards's testimony of his own experience:

The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the cloud, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. (Dwight, I, 61)

Norman Grabo has called attention to the contrast between the way Edwards describes grace as altering the appearance of nature and the more typical descriptions of those like Edward Taylor, who saw "God's grace" as an epistemological change which "like light, shines upon the rational soul and awakens it to the source of all wisdom, Christ."⁹

Yet Grabo has misinterpreted the implications of Edwards's experience, for he implies that "although Edwards sidesteps the error of pantheism, his expressions walk the very brink of that abyss," whereas Taylor's cosmology remains transcendental, so that "the world glorifies its maker, but it always remains apart from him" (45). However, in view of what Edwards has said about grace in various places, it seems best to infer from this description that neither the Word nor the world changes but that the perspective of the recipient of grace changes, so that although nothing new is perceived in the Word or the world, they seem to be of a piece, a unified, coherent, and beautiful work of the Master Artist.

God's two chief means of communication with man, nature and revelation, were coherent because they were unified. Edwards described this conjunction between natural structure and Biblical scripture by advancing his new typology, one which went beyond the traditional interpretation of Old Testament events in view of their New Testament fulfillment, to include also the interpretation of revelatory statements in view of natural facts. The saints could communicate this correspondence to listeners as yet unconverted, thus preparing them for grace, only if the Word and the world were the same for regenerate and unregenerate alike. Therefore, Edwards could not have understood grace as a new Lockean idea. Such ideas are derived from sensory experience, so that the world would have to change before the saint could receive such an idea. The work of the ministry could not be effective if the spiritual truths the preacher spoke about were not visible in the world in which the congregation lived.

Finally we begin to understand the full significance of the short passage with which we began: "By all that we see and experience, the *moral* world, and the *conversible* world, are the same thing. . . ." Conversation—language—brings into being those relationships which are in fact the moral world. Language itself is sustained by society, which in turn received the Word from tradition—the Bible as interpreted by the exemplary speech and behavior of the saints.

Thus it seems odd that in his brilliant introduction to *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, Perry Miller, who recognized that for Edwards only the saints could properly "see" a type (27) and who claimed that Edwards's theology was "an exaltation of nature to a level of authority co-equal with revelation—nature as seen by the regenerate eye . . ." (28), would nevertheless describe grace as a simple idea. As Miller says, "Any dullard with the help of a little logic can argue a priori; any scholar can repeat the argument from design, and all men can read or hear the Bible" (13). Yet just as obviously, any scientist can measure the Newtonian universe. The important, dramatic shift in Edwards's theology from the orthodoxy that justified his shift in rhetoric—from the spiritualization of the commonplace through metaphor to the integration of nature and scripture through typology—is not so much his assertion of the authority of Newtonian physics as his reassertion of the stature and authority of the Puritan saint, an authority that had begun to degenerate from the time of his own grandfather's successful battle against the Halfway Covenant.

There is nothing in Edwards's works to suggest that nature, as such, is anything but corrupt. Lockean empiricism and Newtonian physics may have confirmed that God sustains the world regularly enough for its phenomena to serve as types for spiritual antitypes:

The system of created being may be divided into two parts, the typical world, and the antitypical world. The inferior and carnal, i.e. the more external and transitory part of the universe, that part of it which is inchoative, imperfect, and subservient, is typical of the superiour, more spiritual, perfect, and durable part of it which is the end, and as it were, the substance and consummation of the other. (Dwight, IX, 110-11)

But neither Locke's psychology nor Newton's science can provide the link between the typical and antitypical. Science is important rhetorically only because it confirms the existence of structures and laws that all men can understand.

But if all men can understand the material world, the typical world, only the saints can apprehend the antitypical. Therefore when Edwards describes the structures of excellency, he draws his analogy not to a commonly accessible domain, but to an elitist one—the aesthetic. This is a move that cannot be anticipated by reading Locke, yet it is not a move without precedent or influence. Although Edwards's aesthetic analogy for the means of entry to this elitist realm, grace, is somewhat radical, its corollary, his aesthetic analogy for the moral world itself, certainly is not. In fact it finds its source in one of the most venerable of Puritan traditions.

That Puritan thought was heavily influenced by Peter Ramus's *Institutiones dialecticae libri duo* (1543) is a thesis fully accepted by contemporary scholarship. But the fact that Ramus's influence was most often exerted through his commentators is less commonly noted. Alexander Richardson's *The Logicians School-Master*, John Yates's *A Modell of Divinitie*, and Williams Ames's *Technometry* were all heavily influenced by Ramus and commonly read in Puritan America.¹⁰ Unlike Ramus, any one of these could have sparked Edwards's analogy of the moral to the aesthetic.

However, of these three Richardson was the first to take Ramus's reform of the liberal arts and ground it "in an essentially Thomist metaphysics and epistemology" (John Charles Adams, 4). From the thesis that the world created by God was just that—a created work, a piece of art—Richardson developed his theory of encyclopedia. It held that all things begin and end in the same source, God, not as an extension of God's being, but as "God's Idea." For Richardson "God's Idea" and "art" (created being) were synonymous: "There is not Art but is an eternal rule in the Idea of God, as a precept of that thing whereof it is an Art, to guide it to its *eupraxie* [well doing] . . ." (Richardson, in Adams, p. 122). Thus Richardson's first epistemological premise sounds strangely similar to the notions of Edwards and of Locke: "Derived being is intelligible because God's creative power (i.e., His efficiency) causes it to be in accord with His Primordial Idea" (Adams, 21).

Here the resemblance to Locke ends. For Richardson the regularity of perceived ideas is a necessary though not a sufficient cause of intelligibility. As John Charles Adams has pointed out, "although the perceptible world is intelligible, to know it is not enough. The natural world is good as well as intelligible" (30). Richardson's teleology is based on his understanding of finitude. Since derivative being is finite, all things have limits and therefore quantity. Similarly, since no derivative being is pure act, it "has a form acting upon a matter" (*ibid.*, 130), which determines its quality. Richardson believed that all beings are derived from primary being—the prime mover, God—and since "the *highest, most blessed act* must do nothing in vain" (*ibid.*, 126), form cannot be imposed upon matter without purpose. "*Quality*," therefore, "*is nature and goodness*" (*ibid.*, 130). The nature of things lies in their matter and form; their goodness lies in the ends for which they were made.

The unity between nature and goodness grounds Richardson's definition of his great project, encyclopedia: "*Encyclopedia is that by which all arts are comprehended for the ordering of their ends*" (*ibid.*, 131). In creating the world, God gave man the great paradigm of the proper relationship between art and artist. Creatures and plants subordinate their acts to God's will. Only man rebels. So Richardson's great theme was that "the arts must be held together, before there be encyclopedia . . ." (*ibid.*, 134). All the particular arts, by which Richardson meant all the activities of man, must be linked together "*for the subordination of their ends*" (*ibid.*) if the City of God is to be established on earth.

For Richardson the proper ends for man's activity were readily revealed by the scripture. His problem, then, was to explicate the proper relationships that should exist among the various arts. He found them to be thoroughly interdependent, so that each artist needed to be conversant with both the arts his art depended upon and the arts that depended upon his. The general art is the art of speaking, and accordingly Richardson set out to explain the principles of grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

For Edwards, however, the interpretation of Scripture had itself become problematic. Richardson's coordination of scholastic epistemology and metaphysics with the Puritan worldview could not help Edwards in post-Newtonian America, but Richardson's elaborate analogy of the world as art could.

Richardson quite possibly helped Edwards in another way as well. He may have influenced Edwards to posit grace as the source of rhetorical authority. In the "Ethical Notes" to *The Logicians School-Master* Richardson writes: "For he that will be a good Ethician must not only be an honest man, but such one as hath those things which do attend *bonum* both *corporis et animi*: now as I said before this *gratia* maketh good estimation among men; and from this ariseth *authoritas*, whereby he can do much with men."¹¹ Here Richardson means grace in the classical not the Christian sense, as acting in a proper manner. Grace is the product of ethics, and "Ethica est ars bene gerendise" (128).

At first Richardson appears merely to be repeating the classical "good man theory," which asserts that inner virtue will be reflected in outward actions, in the way a man carries himself. Yet he had previously drawn a distinction between the right actions of the sanctified man and those of the "civic man which wanteth Faith" (128). The civic man "keepeth the rule of Ethicks by the spirit of restraint," whereas the sanctified man is inclined to do good by the spirit of faith. Such an inclination is, as we have already seen, one of the effects of grace as Edwards describes them.

Thus, although Richardson defines *gratia* as an effect of sanctification while to Edwards grace is its cause, and although Richardson describes *gratia* as a harmony between the spirit and the body whereas to Edwards grace produces a harmony between the spiritual truths of revelation and the material forms of nature, for both Richardson and Edwards grace is the seat of rhetorical authority. Such authority arises from a harmony of the corporal and spiritual that even the unsanctified could sense if not understand. This is the power the Puritan divine would need to persuade his flock. If God's grace had given the saint a new simple idea—as if He had given him the power to perceive a new color—how could the saint ever convey such an experience?

Although Edwards undoubtedly drew his conceptions of the material world from the science of his day, he very likely drew his views on spiritual matters from a deeper, more reliable wellspring of Puritan thought. Edwards must have recognized the fundamental differences of attitude one must assume in order to shift from viewing the scholastic world of spirit to viewing the empirical world of matter. It is no wonder, then, that in many ways Edwards's work foreshadows the categorical understanding of transcendental philosophy. Very shortly, Kant would describe the aesthetic standpoint in terms of a capacity to see form as purposiveness when there is no apparent purpose. Edwards defined the moral standpoint in terms of a capacity to see in form a very special purpose. Only God's grace could confer this capacity. It was as unlearned as it was undeserved. Yet once conferred, grace brought a man's vision back into focus, so that he saw as a unity both Scripture and Nature communicating God's harmonious, proportionate, beautiful work of art. This communication gave the Puritan saint his authority to interpret and to teach.

Notes:

1 Perry Miller (ed.), *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, by Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, Conn., 1948), 28.

2 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (London, 1975), 634.

3 Perry Miller, "Edwards, Locke, and the Rhetoric of Sensation," in William J. Scheick (ed.), *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards* (Boston, 1980), 120-35.

4 Michael J. Colacurcio, "The Example of Edwards: Idealist Imagination and the Metaphysics of Sovereignty," in Emory Elliot (ed.), *Puritan Influences in American Literature* (Urbana, 1979), 55-106.

5 Sereno E. Dwight (ed.), *The Works of President Edwards* (New York, 1829), VII, 281.

6 Harvey G. Townsend (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from His Private Notebooks* (Eugene, Oregon, 1955), 130. All the "Miscellanies" used here are from Townsend and will hereafter be referred to simply as "Misc."

- 7 → George Rupp, "The 'Idealism' of Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review*, 62 (1969), 209-26;
Leonard R. Riforgiato, "The Unified Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *Thought*, 47 (1972), 599-610; a→ Claude
A. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards and 'The Way of Ideas,'" *Harvard Theological Review*, 59 (1966), 153-73.
- 8 Samuel Austin (ed.), *The Works of President Edwards* (Worcester, 1808-09), II, 395- 404; 424-37.
- 9 Norman S. Grabo, *Edward Taylor* (New Haven, 1961), 46.
- 10 John Charles Adams, "An Explication and Edition of 'The Preface or Entrance into Book,' 'Grammatical
Notes,' and 'Rhetorical Notes,' from Alexander Richardson's *The Logicians School-Master*" (Diss., Univ. of
Washington, 1983), 2-7.
- 11 Alexander Richardson, *The Logicians School-Master* (London, 1657), 132.